

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 IO-13 DHA-02 DLOS-06 OES-06
SAL-01 /102 W

-----170633Z 068329 /14

R 160923Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2689
INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2148

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT KS US
SUBJ: PUBLIC CONCERNS RE U.S. POLICY

SUMMARY: PUBLIC CONCERN OVER U.S.-ROK ISSUES, PARTICULARLY
TROOP REDUCTION, REMAINS PRIME TOPIC OF EVERY CONVERSATION WE
ARE HAVING THESE DAYS. ROKG CONTINUES TO PROMOTE NATIONAL
SELF-CONFIDENCE. BARRING UNFORESEEN EVENTS, WE EXPECT ROKG
TO CONTINUE PRESENT APPROACH, DESPITE INCREASING PRESSURE.
END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH U.S. HAS TAKEN A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES IN PAST
FEW WEEKS WHICH RELATE TO KOREA, AND HAVE CREATED CONCERN
IN VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF COMMUNITY, UNIVERSAL ISSUE IN
PUBLIC MIND REMAINS TROOP REDUCTION. OFFICIAL COMMUNI-
CATION OF U.S. INTENTIONS REGARDING TROOP REDUCTIONS FROM
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PRESIDENT CARTER TO ROK FONMIN AND PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT WE
INTENDED TO ACT WITHIN FOUR OR FIVE YEARS, APPARENTLY CAME
AS ADDED SHOCK TO ROK PUBLIC DESPITE EARLIER REPORTS OF
U.S. INTENTIONS. DEMONSTRATION BY OPPOSITION NDP AGAINST
TROOP WITHDRAWAL AT U.S. EMBASSY MARCH 12 IS MOST OBVIOUS
INDICATION OF INCREASED TENSION BEING GENERATED WITHIN KOREAN
SOCIETY BY ANXIETY ABOUT CONSEQUENCES OF U.S. FORCE DRAWDOWN,

WHICH PRESS CONTINUED TO REFER TO AS "WITHDRAWAL." WE HAVE HEARD THAT GOVERNMENT PARTY (DRP) IS ALSO UNDER SOME PRESSURE FROM LOCAL PARTY LEADERS, SPECIFICALLY IN UIJOMBU, WHERE I CORPS HQ LOCATED, TO MOUNT SIMILAR DEMONSTRATION AT EMBASSY TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER LOSS OF JOBS WHICH WILL RESULT IF U.S. TROOPS LEAVE.

2. AMONG MORE SOPHISTICATED OBSERVERS RELAXATION OF PASSPORT RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL TO NK HAS GIVEN RISE TO REVIVAL OF WORRIED SPECULATION ABOUT DIRECT CONTACTS WITH NORTH. FISHING AND POSSIBLE QUOTA RESTRICTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN PLAYED WITH HEAVY NEGATIVE BEAT IN PRESS HELP PROMOTE IDEA WITH SOME THAT U.S. IS DEVELOPING MULTI-FACETED ATTACK ON ROK IN EFFORT TO EXTRACT HUMAN RIGHTS CONCESSIONS. WHILE JOINING IN CONCERN ABOUT ABOVE MATTERS, SOME HARD CORE OPPOSITIONISTS HAVE DEVELOPED AN ADDITIONAL CONCERN OF THEIR OWN: THAT CONSTANT STATEMENTS BY U.S. OFFICIALS THAT THERE IS NO LINKAGE BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY ISSUES HARMS THEIR CAUSE AND COULD EVEN LEAD PAK TO THINK THAT TOUGHER DOMESTIC MEASURES WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE TO USG.

3. IN THE FACE OF THESE PRESSURES ROKG IS CONTINUING TO REASSURE PUBLIC ABOUT CONTINUED U.S. COMMITMENT AND BUILD CONFIDENCE IN ROK ABILITY TO CARRY OWN DEFENSE BURDEN. WHILE WORRIES AND RESENTMENTS AGAINST U.S. POP UP IN PRESS REPORTS AND EDITORIALS, FOR MOST PART EDITORIALISTS ARE FOLLOWING PRESCRIBED LOW-KEY GOVERNMENT LINE. ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE BLUE HOUSE SECRETARY, PRESIDENT PAK PREFERS CONTINUED U.S. PRESENCE BUT MUST PREPARE PUBLIC FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL BY BUILDING NATIONAL CONFIDENCE IN ROK ABILITY TO CARRY DEFENSE RESPONSIBILITY. IT'S A BIG JOB. NUMEROUS CONVERSATIONS WE HAVE HAD WITH ORDINARILY WELL-INFORMED KOREANS INDICATE THAT PESSIMISM ABOUT THIS ROK CAPABILITY IS STRONG, PARTICULARLY AMONG PROFESSIONAL MILITARY AND THE MAN IN THE STREET. HOWEVER TO VARYING DEGREES ENTIRE COUNTRY IS APPARENTLY AFFLICTED WITH GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT FUTURE WITHOUT U.S. GROUND FORCES. ALTHOUGH IN ACCORD BLUE HOUSE "CONTAINMENT POLICY" DRP IS HOLDING TO OFFICIAL POSITION THAT THERE IS NO NEED FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL, ET AL., DISCUSSIONS OF THIS ISSUE WITHIN PARTY HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN EMOTIONAL.

4. ALTHOUGH WE EXPECT PUBLIC ANXIETY TO CONTINUE TO GROW, DESPITE GOVERNMENT EFFORTS, ROKG DOES NOT REALLY HAVE ANY GOOD ALTERNATIVES TO ITS PRESENT ATTEMPT TO PROJECT AN IMPRESSION OF RELATIVE CONFIDENCE ABOUT WHATEVER THE FUTURE MAY BRING. THUS, WHILE WE DO NOT RULE OUT ADDITIONAL EMOTIONAL PUBLIC OUTBURSTS ALONG LINES OF MARCH 12 NDP

DEMONSTRATION, FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST WE EXPECT ROKG
TO KEEP LID ON PANICKY AND DEMONSTRATIVE REACTIONS TO
U.S. POLICIES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, KS, US
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vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/00c209b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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